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ORIGINAL ARTICLES

Medieval Virtues as Public Values? The Burgeoning Public Sector and the Articulation of Public Values in Late Medieval Holland

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Public values research is a major topic in public administration science, but little attention has been given to the origin of public values. This article traces the origin of public values to the development of the public sphere and public offices in the late Middle Ages, a period often dismissed as an age of particularism to which notions of the public sphere and public values are not applicable. There has been little inquiry into the Middle Ages in the field of administrative history. As this article shows, however, a public sphere began to develop in late medieval Holland, both in the minds of the learned and in practice. Christian virtues were pulled into this burgeoning public sphere and given specific meanings related to the administrative behavior of public officeholders. The virtues were, by this means, transformed into public values that are still held in high esteem in present-day public administration.

Since the 1970s, public administration literature has produced a steady stream of writings on public values that have highlighted new ways of thinking about administrative ethics (Cooper, 2001, p. 11). The rationales for studying public values are manifold. Jørgensen (1999, p. 580), for example, argues that public values matter for a “general discourse of values and principles to be preferred in a future public sector.” Public organizations have to actualize public values and act in accordance with them. Individual public servants are expected to behave in line with these values in their professional work.

Little attention has been given to the origins of public values, however. The present article focuses on this gap and places the origin of a specific set of our current public values within the medieval development of the public sector, the public sphere, and thinking about the public interest. The proposition of this study is that present-day public values in the West originated in the Middle Ages, a period in Western European history when the foundations of public administration institutions, practices, and thought were laid down. The value of this historical

approach is that it increases our understanding of the structures, institutions and habits of administrative practice and theory (Raadschelders, 1994, p. 121, 1998, p. 9; Raadschelders, Rutgers, Wagenaar, & Overeem, 2000, p. 777). Thus, historical research sheds light on the origins of public values in Western Europe and traces how they developed over time to influence contemporary public values debates in the Netherlands.

PUBLIC VALUES

Many scholarly publications discuss public values, but only a few explicitly define them (Van der Wal, Nabatchi, & de Graaf, 2013; for a recent definition, see Rutgers, 2014, p. 12). Public values scholars try to make some sense of the many public values by categorizing them (e.g., Gortner, 2000; Kernaghan, 2000; Van Wart, 1998). The most elaborate categorization was made by Jørgensen and Bozeman (2007), who distinguish seven value constellations based on the aspects of public administration affected by the various public values. They distinguish between values concerning public administration's contribution to society, the transformation of interests to decisions, the relationship between officeholders and politicians, the relationship between officeholders and their environment, intra-organizational aspects, the behavior of public sector employees, and the relationship between public administration and citizens. In this article, the focus is on just one of these value constellations, namely the behavior desired of public officeholders. Within this category, integrity of the public servant is the most important value. This value category closely relates to the ideas of Cooper on administrative virtues. Cooper (1987) argues that a virtue is a disposition of character that public servants should internalize in their behavior and actions in the pursuit of realizing the obligations of government to the public, such as serving the public interest, and the goods related to the obligations. The focus on this value category also fits with the definition of a public value, presented by Rutgers (2014, p. 12), as "a specific sub-group of public values concerning the nature and behavior of . . . public functionaries." Following Rutgers's discussion of public values, I combine his definition with the specific value constellation on the desired behavior of public sector employees presented by Beck Jørgensen and Bozeman to examine public values in medieval Holland. Because processes of democratization and bureaucratization did not take place until some centuries later, the other categories are not applicable to the Middle Ages. The desirable behavior is seen from the perspective of the public: The question is not which values are highly esteemed by public functionaries, but which behavior the public desires of them. Thus, public value is defined as a value articulated and given meaning either by individuals, collectives, or the entire political community within the public sphere, and referring to the desirable behavior of public officeholders and/or the desirable outcomes of public organizations. This conceptualization means that we should examine the development of the public sector and the public sphere, and reconstruct the normative discourse on public values articulated by the public toward government.

MEDIEVAL HOLLAND AS A CASE

The county of Holland and texts produced at or around the court of the count of Holland between 1250 and 1450 present an interesting case study for understanding the origin of public values.

This is so for several reasons. First, Holland is representative of cultural and administrative aspects of medieval France and Germany, Western Europe's most important cultural spheres at the time. Holland was part of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, but its princely court was also oriented to French cultural and administrative practices (Vale, 2001/2003, pp. 290–294). The county was ruled by the House of Holland until 1299, followed by the French-oriented House of Avesnes between 1299 and 1345 and the Bavarian House of Wittelsbach between 1345 and 1433. In 1433, Holland came under the rule of the dukes of Burgundy, slowly losing its independence. Furthermore, the court of Holland reflected the courtly culture of late medieval European courts. The princely courts functioned as gathering places for social and political elites and as centers where works of art and scholarship were produced. Due to the high degree of contacts between the courts maintained by traveling courtiers, such as high noblemen, officeholders, scholars, and poets, the princely courts shared many cultural practices. The court of Holland, like the many other medieval courts, was a nodal point in both local and European political, social, and cultural networks (Gunn & Janse, 2006; Vale, 2001/2003).

HISTORICAL SOURCES

In this article, I use the legal treatise *De cura reipublicae et sorte principantis*, written by the “Dutch” jurist Philip of Leyden between 1352 and 1382, to analyze the development of the public sector and public sphere. The *De cura* was both a scholarly treatise and a handbook on administrative matters based on the author's academic and administrative background. In addition to this work, I analyzed a range of narrative sources to further uncover important public values. I selected eight narrative sources based on secondary literature: four chronicles, two didactic works, a collection of poems, and one work of the mirrors-for-princes literature (Andringa, 1994; Carasso-Kok, 1981; Daniëls, 1932; Janse, 2001; Meder, 1991; Pansters, 2007; Van Herwaarden, 1994; Van Oostrom, 2006).¹ These sources were written for (future) princes, members of the nobility, and political elites. As such, these documents offer valuable insights into the prescribed administrative behavior for public officeholders (for a different perspective on the usefulness of these sources, see Rutgers, 1997, p. 279). This article examines how learned individuals at and around the court of Holland thought about the desired behavior of public officeholders. Although this normative discourse was formulated in the realm of medieval academia, this does not mean that its impact was limited to the realm of medieval academia, an often-heard critique (Wagenaar, Van der Meij & Van der Heijden, 2005, pp. 6–9). The authors recited their works at the princely court in the vernacular Middle Dutch (*Diets*) that was widely spoken in the region. At court, the authors presented their values for administrative practices for the social and political elite. This means that these values were indeed heard by a larger segment of the population than just medieval academics.

THE PUBLIC SPHERE AND PUBLIC SECTOR

The origin of public values is intertwined with several developments during the High and Late Middle Ages. The position of regional princes changed, as did their relationships with their subjects or the community. Within these changing positions and relations, the institutionalization of public offices slowly began to take shape. Medieval scholars gave much thought to the

responsibilities of the prince and his officeholders for the public interest, and this too affected the articulation of a certain set of public values.

A Burgeoning Public Sphere: Changing Relations Between Prince and Subjects

From the end of the thirteenth century, relations between the prince and his subjects changed, a development I see as a burgeoning public sphere. Scholars have debated the question whether a public sphere existed in the Middle Ages. The dominant view, based on the nature of feudalism, holds that there was no public sphere and private sphere (Rutgers, 1997; Weintraub, 1997, p. 13). As such, the Middle Ages are often characterized as a time of “particularism.” Habermas (1964/1974, 1989) dismisses the idea of a public sphere in the Middle Ages and the early modern period. He suggests that what did exist at the time was a representative public sphere, where princes showed their social status, their public authority, literally before the public at their court. The physical presence of the prince was the representative public sphere. Habermas is right when he states that the princely court was a nodal point where the prince and (members of) the community interacted, and where the latter could—with a certain degree of freedom—articulate their values, wishes, and expectations to the prince. The total dismissal of a public sphere, though, may be somewhat too bold. Some historians argue that there was indeed a public sphere in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe (Pollmann & Spicer, 2007, p. 1). Hallenberg (2012) shows how the administrative sphere in Sweden became more public from the mid-fifteenth century to the mid-seventeenth century. He suggests that the relation between the prince and his subjects not only manifested itself at court, but also in matters related to taxes. The prince was in constant need of financial resources and was forced to ask the cities and estates for extra money. This is not only true for Sweden; in Holland the count first incidentally bargained with the cities and the estates for extra taxes in return for granting all sorts of rights, but this developed into a regular yearly bargaining, called the *bede* (Bos-Rops, 1993, pp. 234–237). This created a public sphere outside the court (cf. Hallenberg, 2012). Bargaining over financial matters was part of a broader European development of the relationship between princes and their subjects. From the end of the thirteenth century, the prince relied less on enforcing his demands in favor of institutionalized processes of bargaining and consulting the cities and the estates. As a result, relations between the prince and his subjects came to be characterized by institutionalized bargaining based on written documents and agreements and the use of Roman law (Poggi, 1978/2004, p. 57).

The Prince and the Public Interest

Concurrent with the changing relations between prince and subjects, the position of the dukes and counts also changed, from imperial officeholders to regional princes who wielded state power in their own right. Within this broader European trend, the position of the count of Holland changed too. The legalist and clergyman Philip of Leyden wrote his *De cura reipublicae et sorte principantis* while in service as a clerk in the chancelleries of the count of Holland and the bishop of Utrecht. In it he reflected on the position of the regional princes and the functioning of the medieval state. Philip of Leyden depicts how medieval Holland operated at the time, but also elaborates his own ideas about how Holland should operate functionally as a state.

His ideas are very reminiscent of our present ideas on the functioning of the state. Philip's thought is important to discuss here for a better understanding of the position of the regional princes and their relations with their subjects. Philip based himself on classic medieval political theory, in which all public authority originated from the emperor or king. This theory was based on the notion, based on Roman law, that political sovereignty was held by the emperor or king (Reynolds, 1994). In the Code of Justinian, the emperor (*princeps*), as sole holder of sovereignty (*majestas*), stands above the law (*legibus solutus*). This status was taken over in their respective domains by the German emperor, the king of France, and the king of England. Philip of Leyden refined this general political idea to fit with the political realities of his time. The emperor (*princeps maior*) was the holder of imperial authority, but had to share it with the lesser princes (*princeps minor*): namely the dukes and counts, such as the count of Holland. Over time, the position of highest political authority in the county gradually ceased to be an office-holder (*comes*) who exercised imperial authority over a *gouw* (*comitatus*) in the name of the emperor, and evolved instead into a semi-sovereign prince who had usurped imperial rights (*regalen*) (Leyden, 1516/1975, fols. XLVIir., LVIIr.; Timmer, 2008). Philip referred to each of these lesser princes as an *imperator impartibus suis*: emperor in his own lands. This does not mean they were equal to the emperor or the king. The *princeps minor* did not stand above the law and had to obey the customs of his lands. However, he was the head of the *respublica* and wielded parts (*portio*) of the imperial authority (*potestas*) (Leupen, 1983, pp. 484–485). The concept of *respublica* and the position of the prince—in this case, the count of Holland—in relation to the community is discussed at length by Philip of Leyden. He conceptualized it as the community in a given geographical area, the general interest of the community, and the prince and his interest. The *respublica* was thus a community of interest formed by the inhabitants of a given region and their prince, often symbolized as a human body with the prince as the head. This symbolization signals the developing notion of a legal entity, just as the state is nowadays a legal body (Timmer, 2008, pp. 19–23). Philip of Leyden was primarily concerned with the notion of “public interest” and stated that it was best protected by one single individual: the prince (Leupen, 1975, p. 247). In his view, the prince was the only one who was able to protect the public interest, because it was part of the *regalia* (rights) held by the prince, based on Roman law or the list of *regalia* summed up by Emperor Frederick I (“Barbarossa”) in his *Constitutio de regalibus*. The princely rights set down in this constitution were not alienable by the prince, because alienation would harm the *respublica*. Moreover, in order to protect the *respublica*, it was the duty of the prince to expand his princely rights (Timmer, 2008). Philip considered many of the *regalia* to be specific elements of the public interest, because they concerned the well-being of the public or community.

Phillip of Leyden's ideas mark the beginning of thought about the public interest, defining it conceptually as the body of tangible activities that needed the attention of government, *in casu* the prince and his officeholders. At the core of these public interests stood *pax et iustitia*: the duty of the prince to organize government and justice and to keep the peace (Timmer, 2008, p. 197). In order to protect the public interest, the prince needed to regulate the extraction of raw materials and minerals, such as peat digging, salt extraction, and logging. Peat and wood were used as fuels, and traders shipped these commodities across the county's borders. Philip of Leyden feared that unregulated trade in these commodities could lead to a fuel shortage in Holland and should thus be regulated by the prince. Another problem was that the unrestrained extraction of salt, peat, and timber would lead to unsustainable land use and increase the chance

of flooding (Timmer, 2008, pp. 152–158). As a delta, the county was constantly threatened by water and at the same time heavily dependent on it. Because of the importance of surface waters, such as the many inlets and rivers, for transportation, consumption, fishery, and sanitary purposes, the management and maintenance of waterways was one of the most important rights exercised by the prince. Count Floris V organized water management in the second half of the thirteenth century by installing dike wardens (*dijkgraven*) and water boards (*heemraadschappen*) (Timmer, 2008, pp. 160–166). The maintenance of roads was the responsibility of the residents of the immediate area. In places where this was not the case, Philip recommended a sort of direct-benefit principle: Nearby cities were responsible for road maintenance, because they used the roads for trading. Local bailiffs could order residents and cities to repair and maintain the roads if they were reluctant to do so (Timmer, 2008, pp. 166–174). Mintage rights were one of the most important *regalia* showing princely status. The prince was the only authority who could hold and exercise these rights, not only because it showed his status, but also because it was the only way to somewhat organize the weak monetary system. Phillip of Leyden advised in *De cura* that the prince should punish counterfeiters severely, by first boiling them in a cauldron of hot water and then hanging them. By devaluing and revaluing, the prince upheld the economic benefit of the monetary system for the public (Timmer, 2008, pp. 185–190). Philip of Leyden (1516/1975, fols. XXVv.–XXVlr.) also discussed the organization of city guilds. He was a fierce opponent of guilds, and especially attacked the monopolies they exercised and the price agreements made by their members, because these hindered free trade and harmed the public interest. Phillip advised the prince to regulate (free) trade and to revoke the rights held by the guilds (Timmer, 2008, p. 212). These new ideas about tangible activities that needed the attention of government had an effect on the development of public offices and values that scholars deemed important for the fulfillment of public offices.

Institutionalization of Public Offices

The development of the public sector and of public offices is intertwined with the burgeoning public sphere and medieval thought on the public interest and the *respublica*. The changing political and legal relations between the prince and his subjects and the emergence of a public sphere had important consequences for the shaping and functioning of public offices. At the central level, this was the development and institutionalization of the princely council. The development of this institution followed an international pattern. The *curia regis*, which operated literally in the physical presence of the prince, developed into a model whereby the council assembled in the prince's absence, the so-called *consilium* (Damen, 2000; Janse, 2001). Intertwined with this process was the ongoing professionalization of the council and its members. The royal council functioned both as an advisory body to the king and as the highest juridical court. The more frequent use of Roman law over time, as opposed to common law, stimulated the appointment of schooled professional jurists and policymakers instead of noblemen, based on letters of appointment with almost the character of employment contracts (Damen, 2000; Strayer, 1970/2005). In Holland, the princely council (*Raad* or *Hof van Holland*) was introduced as an advisory body in the second half of the thirteenth century by Count William II. The first permanent councilors were appointed by contract in the first half of the fourteenth century (Damen, 2000; Janse, 2001).

Since the mid-thirteenth century, and following the pattern in neighboring Flanders, bailiffs and stewards in Holland functioned as public officeholders intermediating between the count and his subjects at the local level. On behalf of the count, they exercised some of his princely rights and therefore wielded considerable state power. The bailiff was responsible for administering justice, upholding the peace, local water management, and organizing the *heervaat* (military service). The steward was a financial officer who collected taxes and incomes from the *regalen* held by the count (Janse, 2001; Van Rompaey, 1967). Traditionally, many of these officeholders were noblemen. But Philip of Leyden proposed in his *De cura* that these offices, up to then held in fief by Holland's knighthood, could be filled by persons schooled in law or with experience in finance based on employment contracts with appropriate regular incomes (Timmer, 2008, pp. 197–209). Philip of Leyden thus saw these officeholders as public officeholders, wielding state power in name of the prince. The fourteenth-century courtly poet Willem van Hildegarsberch (1870/1981, pp. 181–183) also acknowledged, although in a more implicit manner, the public nature of these officeholders. In one of his poems, he stressed the importance of accounting by bailiffs and stewards, for these officeholders wielded public authority in name of their lord. Furthermore, having to account for their deeds was also of importance to the public.

These changes were the first steps in the development of the public sector in Western Europe. Due to the change in his position from *comes* to *princeps minor*, the prince became the head of the *respublica* and had to further the public interest. At the central level, councilors became professional policymakers and judges in the council, and at the local level, bailiffs and stewards wielded aspects of state authority in the prince's name. These officeholders served in their offices more and more often on the basis of letters of appointment and contracts. As such, they too had a responsibility to serve the *respublica* and further the public interest, making them public officeholders accountable for their actions to both the prince and the community. This legitimizes the use of the present-day term “public offices and “public officeholders.” The emergence of the public sector, the institutionalization of public offices, and the developing notion of the functioning of the state led to new ideas on how officeholders should behave, or in other words, to the articulation of public values.

MEDIEVAL PUBLIC VALUES

Public values cannot be fully understood without at least a basic idea of ethics as it existed at the time. The most influential moral philosopher was Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), who combined medieval Christian theology and philosophy with the ethics of Aristotle. Aquinas discussed four cardinal virtues that he deemed important for all members of society, but considered especially vital to princes: prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude. Besides these cardinal virtues, Aquinas stressed the importance of three theological virtues: faith (belief in God), hope (refraining from despair), and charity (selfless and unconditional love for God, one's neighbors, and the less fortunate) (Bejczy, 2008a, 2008b; Elders, 2005; Weinberg, 1964). These cardinal and theological values formed the basis for medieval virtue ethics. Throughout the Middle Ages, the writings of Thomas Aquinas and other medieval philosophers were widely read and reproduced. They found their way to the social and political elites through a variety of scholarly works, chronicles, and poems. Aquinas's writings inspired a range of other medieval philosophers, scholars, and writers, to write and think about the

virtues and personal characteristics they deemed necessary qualities of public officeholders. Since women were excluded from the realm of public office and politics, the authors in these eight works utilized in the present article focused exclusively on men. All of the authors agreed that women possessed certain mental and physical characteristics that made them unfit to govern and take up public office roles (Anonymous & Stoke, 2004, pp.164–165; Franconis, 1912, p. 32; Van Delf, 1937, p. 579). Their discussions of the physical appearance of public officeholders, therefore, emphasized features like a masculine appearance (symbolizing the physical strength of the prince and bailiffs), having a beard (symbolizing worldly wisdom and maturity), wearing a purple cloak (symbolizing princely authority) or a robe and cap for judges. In addition, a crown and scepter symbolized princely status, while a staff was the accessory of choice for bailiffs and judges (Franconis, 1912; Heyneszoon, 1999; Van Delf, 1937, 1938, 1939). Besides discussing the ideal physical appearance of public officeholders, the medieval authors discussed the character traits that they considered necessary requirements for fulfilling a public office. All of them agreed that it was important for the prince, councilors, and domain officers to be vigorous. In his *Rijmkroniek* (Rhyme Chronicle of Holland), Melis Stoke (Anonymous & Stoke, 2004, p. 130) rhetorically asked his audience: “Does he [the prince] who is benign and not stern govern the people well?”² His answer was simple: “And the stern [prince] takes action against those who have intemperate desires.... And [the prince] has to fight injustice with vigor.”³ Thus, according to Stoke, the prince had to be firm and resort to strict punishments against those who violated the law. Van Delf (1937, p. 580) makes the same point: that “with vigor and power [bailiffs had to] enforce justice.”⁴ In a similar way, Franconis (1912, pp. 7, 32–33) underlined the importance of steadfastness (*stadicheit*) and perseverance (*volstandicheit*) for the functioning of councilors. Wisdom was considered another crucial trait of princes and councilors. So much value was placed on wisdom that Van Delf (1937, pp. 551–552) considered it one of the cardinal values, *prudentia*. He understood wisdom as the capacity of the prince to understand the present, foresee the future, and remember the past. Further developing the notion of wisdom, Franconis (1912, pp. 11–12) made a distinction between two kinds of wisdom: *vroetscap* and *wijsheit*. The first meant wisdom acquired by learning and experience of life, the latter meant loving and serving God, trying to understand His plans for humanity and act accordingly. As an ideal, wisdom was a symbol of the maturity of the prince and a necessary intellectual capacity to rule. The emphasis on wisdom, steadfastness, and perseverance went hand in hand with the ability to control emotions that was considered an important value for fulfilling a public office. Franconis (1912, p. 40) wrote that “a good lord should study for administering [fair] justice, and that he should forbear this for love, for sorrow, for fear or for personal benefit.”⁵ Van Delf (1937, p. 553) had the same opinion regarding such emotions. He argued that judges and princes should master the emotions of fear, envy, love, and hate, because such emotions could lead to unjust laws and unfair judgments. In the same manner, Van Delf warned officeholders to be aware of pride, because this was harmful for the realm and the people (Van Delf, 1937, p. 554). In short, these authors recognized that the control of one’s emotions was important for the stable functioning of government. Of all the virtues associated with public office, being just or fair was perhaps the most debated. In most cases, the authors related this value to justice or the administration of justice. For example, Van Maerlant (1882, p. 18) taught the young Count Floris V to be “just in everything, to [u]phold the law and punish those who were malicious.”⁶ Of course, when it came to administering justice, impartiality was part

of being just. According to Melis Stoke, the prince should be fair to all his subjects, regardless of their material wealth (Anonymous & Stoke, 2004, pp. 130–131). Van Hildegarsberch (1870/1981, pp. 149–153) also stressed the importance of impartiality for bailiffs and councilors, when he wrote “that thou [bailiffs and councilors] consider both sides... be they poor or rich, because God will treat you the same.”⁷ Franconis (1912, pp. 14–15) noted that the prince had to be impartial when relatives appeared before his court. To underline this argument, Franconis recounted the (fictional) story of a “noble and mighty prince,” Erkenbald of Burdan, who “was devoted to justice, that he spared no one from justice, but delivered fair justice” to everyone.⁸ Erkenbald did so even toward his own kin. Upon hearing that his nephew and heir to his throne had sexually assaulted a woman, Erkenbald ordered his nephew hanged. His servants pretended to do as Erkenbald had ordered. After some time, when Erkenbald’s nephew felt his uncle’s wrath had cooled, he visited his uncle. But Erkenbald had not forgotten, and when his nephew appeared before him, he took a knife and stabbed him to death. On his deathbed, Erkenbald took his confession, but did not speak of this deed. His chaplain asked if he did not want to confess it, on which Erkenbald replied that he had no regrets. Upon hearing this, the priest refused the prince his last sacraments. However, by divine intervention, the sacred host was placed in the prince’s mouth. This parable shows that a prince—and judges in general—should be impartial in judgment, regardless of family ties or social status. Van Delf (1937, p. 553) also stated that the prince, in his role as judge, should give balanced sentences, regardless of a person’s background (*sonder uutsach van uutnemen der personen*), without hate, love, or fear, and without sparing any person from fair justice. Closely related to the administration of justice was the responsibility of the prince, councilors, and bailiffs for the security of the community and upholding the peace. The chronicler Johannes Beke (1982, pp. 119–129) illustrated this by a story about the efforts of Lord Albrecht of Waldeck, a judge in the imperial court, to establish the *lantvrede* or *pax imperii* (peace commandment). In a time of great strife between the Welfisch and Staufisch factions in the Holy Roman Empire, Lord Albrecht invited representatives of the imperial cities to talk about the *lantvrede*. After they came to an agreement, Lord Albrecht and the cities asked Roman-King William of Holland and his councilors to confirm the *lantvrede* by a royal charter. Beke predicted that peace would bring the prince great benefits and honor. One of the values instrumental for good relations between the prince, his officeholders, and the community was accountability. In his poem *Vander Rekeninghe* (On Accounts), the poet Willem van Hildegarsberch (1870/1981, pp. 149–153) debated the value of accountability. Van Hildegarsberch considered it mandatory for every officeholder to hand over a solidly written yearly report on his activities and the incomes and expenses of the princely domains. Indirectly, this account would also indicate how much money the officeholder had to hand over to the prince or his treasurer. Van Hildegarsberch viewed this account as part of “good government.” According to him, any officeholder who did not hand over this written account or whose accounts were incorrect was “called a fool or a rogue. The rogue does not want to know his debt. The fool by then has forgotten what his debt is, when one [the prince] summon him to give account” (van Hildegarsberch, 1870/1981, p. 150).⁹ Accountability was a written account of the process of fulfilling one’s office toward the prince, instead of an account of outcomes. Furthermore, because giving a correct account was part of “good government practice,” it was an account to the community, so that “the community would not complain” (van Hildegarsberch, 1870/1981, p. 150).¹⁰ In line with emerging medieval

notions about accountability, the issues of corruption and the practice of gift giving were also debated. Historians such as Boone (1988), Damen (2006), and Van Uytven (1986) demonstrate the importance of gifts in political networks in late medieval Western Europe. But whereas the practice of gift giving was a normal, even a required, courtly behavior in political networks, many medieval authors considered giving and receiving gifts in the administration of justice as something reprehensible or corrupt (Damen, 2006). Many authors anticipated that the practice of accepting corrupt gifts (*mieden*) would hinder the impartiality of the prince, the judge, and of justice in general (Van Maerlant, 1882, p. 15). According to some authors, stinginess (*ghiericheid*) was the main reason why officeholders accepted bad gifts. They considered it unhealthy for officeholders to acquire material wealth—or, better, to acquire more material wealth than they deserved on the basis of their social standing (Franconis, 1912, p. 33; van Delf, 1937, pp. 581–582; van Hildegarsberch, 1870/1981, pp. 139–142). Thus, avarice was something princes and officeholders could do without, for it would bring mischief to society. Jacob van Maerlant (1882, p. 15) linked avarice to justice in his didactic work for his young pupil, Count Floris V, when he argued that avarice “darkens one’s virtuousness. It makes someone forget justice.”¹¹ If we may believe some of the authors, avarice was a widespread sin, committed by many officeholders. Franconis (1912, pp. 34–36) argued that avarice was the main reason for accepting *mieden*. Being avaricious forced a judge to sell justice, because the “miser is always in need for money, no matter his wealth.”¹² This was a great sin in his eyes, for the judge would be selling something—namely justice—that was not his, but belonged to God. In many of his poems, Willem van Hildegarsberch therefore pointed to avarice as the main reason for corruption and injustice (Meder, 1991, pp. 292–303). In the poem “About Avarice” (*Dit is vander ghiericheit*), which he dedicated entirely to this matter, Van Hildegarsberch argued that avarice and corruption were widespread under judges and noblemen of the county (van Hildegarsberch, 1870/1981, pp. 139–142). He told his audience (the same officeholders and lords he criticized in his poem) that accepting gifts was not only bad for the impartiality of justice; it was also bad for the social order. He warned that avarice would lead to pride and envy, ingredients for political conflict. In the Chronicle of Gouda (*het Goudse Kroniekje*), the unknown author recounted story of “The Bailiff and the Cow,” well known to his medieval contemporaries, as a way to debate administrative values. In the story, the bailiff of *Zuidholland* (a part of the county around the city of Dordrecht) jealously desires the cow owned by a poor peasant in his bailiwick and finds a way to obtain it. Friends and family advise the peasant to make a complaint to Count William III of Holland. Upon hearing the peasant’s complaint, the count summons his bailiff to his court to account for his actions. William the Good, as he was known, orders the bailiff to give back the cow and pay the peasant a yearly sum of money from his own purse. The matter between the bailiff and the peasant is now settled, but there is still another issue. The chronicler lets the count speak: “Now you have settled matters with the poor man, but not with me.”¹³ The count sends for his headsman. He himself draws his sword, and has the headsman deliver the count’s justice on the bailiff.¹⁴ The chronicler points to several ethical notions in this tale. First and foremost, it warns officeholders not to abuse their office for their own benefit. The lesson for the prince is to protect the rights of his subjects and to correct officeholders who abuse their powers. Second, it delineates the proper relation between prince and officeholder. The officeholder must be loyal to the prince—and therefore should not detract from the honor of the prince by harming the *respublica* in fulfilling his office.

MEDIEVAL ORIGINS OF PRESENT-DAY PUBLIC VALUES

As these examples show, most of the debates on public values prescribed how the prince or other officeholders should or should not act or behave, and specified the ideal personal characteristics expected of public officeholders. Some of these medieval values are no longer explicitly part of our current public values constellation. Most notable in this respect is the value of temperance, often understood as controlling one's emotions. However, many of the values that inform contemporary understandings of public office roles originated in the Middle Ages, where they existed in embryonic form or were already fully developed.

Medieval Values for Public Sector Employee Behavior

When we compare the medieval values to our contemporary ideas about the behavior of public sector employees as listed by Beck Jørgensen and Bozeman (2007, pp. 367–368), it is clear that some of these values have a much longer history than we usually imagine. According to Beck Jørgensen and Bozeman, the most important value in the values constellation regarding the behavior of public sector employees is integrity. Among other things, integrity means that the public officeholder is unmoved by personal motives and interests, does not submit to bribery, and has the strength to stick to certain principles. Other values in this value category that are held in high esteem today, as they were in the late Middle Ages, are loyalty, impartiality, and accountability.

Integrity

Integrity is a personal value that is not simple to define. Not accepting gifts is one of the elements defining integrity. Medieval authors warned judges not to accept gifts because doing so would compromise justice. However, it was perfectly acceptable for other officeholders to accept gifts for maintaining administrative relations. Nowadays, giving and accepting gifts is seen as reprehensible for all public officeholders. However, gifts are still part of maintaining social relations, and this is also true for public administration. Accepting gifts is thus allowed under certain circumstances for public officeholders, such as a maximum set value of gifts, disclosure of the accepted gifts, and as long as giving and accepting gifts does not influence decision-making. Integrity also means that officeholders should be unmoved by personal interests. It is clear that this was true for medieval judges, but some scholars also asked the same aspect of integrity from bailiffs operating as local administrators. Acting upon personal interest by public officeholders hinders the public interest and is therefore condemned in our present-day society. Strength is another aspect of integrity. Medieval authors stressed the importance of strength for the prince to keep a straight course. At present, we see strength as important for political officeholders in the first place—they should stand up for their principles. But we also expect public officeholders to have the strength to be unmoved by gifts and issues of the day and to stay on course.

Loyalty

In the Middle Ages, the loyalty of an officeholder to the prince was an important value. In practice, this meant that the officeholder was to carefully protect the prince's rights and dutifully carry out princely orders and wishes. Today, we still demand personal loyalty of public

officeholders to the political regime and the system they are working in. Loyalty has also become one of the bureaucratic values every officeholder should abide by in order for the bureaucracy to function as an instrument of the political regime for which it works.

Impartiality

Many medieval authors held that impartiality was important not only for judges, but also for the prince in his relations with his subjects. Nowadays we expect public officeholders and public organizations to be impartial or neutral in their contacts with individual citizens or groups. This is true not only for direct contacts between public officeholders and citizens or groups, but also for officeholders impartial in weighing competing (social) interests of all kinds of actors in decision-making.

Accountability

Medieval authors understood accountability as personal accountability to the prince and the public regarding the financial revenues of the princely rights and domains, and for whatever actions the officeholder undertakes in fulfilling his office. At present, individual officeholders are still accountable for the actions and decisions they take in their official role, but this idea has broadened in the sense that public organizations and public administration as a whole are held accountable for achieving policy goals and outcomes.

Medieval Virtues for Pursuing the Public Interest

Many of the public values found in the medieval literature are essentially moral virtues given a specific meaning relating to the administrative behavior of the prince and his officeholders. The medieval idea of the *respublica* meant that the prince and his officeholders had an obligation to further the public interest, and the articulated virtues were an instrumental or necessary condition for pursuing the public interest. The relation between these medieval virtues and furthering the public interest resonates with present-day administrative ethicists; for example, the ideas of Cooper (1987). One of the obligations of public servants is to pursue the public interest. However vague the concept of public interest might be, there are ideas about the concrete actions and outcomes related to it—the tangible activities that need the attention of government. Thought about the public interest began to develop in the Middle Ages, with comparable tangible activities at the core of pursuing the public interest. The prince and his officeholders had an obligation to pursue the public interest for the benefit of the *respublica*—the public and the prince included. This was and is, first and foremost, justice—*pax et iustitia*. Today justice is the fundamental ordering principle of a democratic society. Cooper argues that virtues such as prudence, fair-mindedness, and courage are instrumental to achieve justice.

Fair-Mindedness

Being just or fair-minded is intertwined with justice, and medieval authors stressed the importance for judges and princes to be just or deliver fair justice. Cooper (1987, p. 325) argues that nowadays fair-mindedness is a directly supportive virtue for achieving justice as a public good.

Prudence

Many medieval writers considered prudence or wisdom an important attribute for public officeholders. It meant that the life experience and knowledge of officeholders enabled them to choose the right means and action in order to achieve good ends. Nowadays, prudence is seen as a suspicious virtue. However, according to Cooper (1987, pp. 325, 328), being prudent is a necessary condition for making conscious choices and finding the right means for achieving good ends, as opposed to choices based on one's feelings and emotions or motivated by favorable short-term outcomes for the organization.

Courage

Fortitude, courage, or strength was cited by many medieval authors as an important virtue for the prince, members of the nobility, and bailiffs. They meant not only courage on the battlefield, but also the courage to persevere in political choices. Nowadays, courage means the latter: Public officeholders, for example, should not bow to external pressures, such as favorable outcomes for the organization or pressure from interests groups, and change course in exchange for political support.

FROM MEDIEVAL VIRTUES TO PRESENT-DAY PUBLIC VALUES

The professionalization of public offices in Western Europe in the High and Late Middle Ages influenced thinking about administrative behavior. A number of medieval scholars tried to develop a set of moral virtues to guide the administrative behavior of powerful princes and their officeholders in pursuing the public interest. During this time, the public sector was not yet bureaucratized as a system, and governing depended solely on the person fulfilling the public office. This is the main reason why there was so much emphasis on personal moral virtues. Many of the medieval virtues, such as integrity, regime loyalty, fair-mindedness, justice, prudence, and courage, form the historical core of our present-day public values constellation. The specific origin of this set of public values, and its focus on the behavior and virtuousness of individual officeholders, means that it is often in tension or conflict with more recently developed (nonmoral) democratic, bureaucratic, and institutional public values. The historical dimension of some of our present-day public values as instrumental virtues for the fulfillment of public office is perhaps the reason why we still hold public officeholders accountable for their actions on the basis of their personal moral virtue.

NOTES

1. The following sources were studied: *Alexanders Geesten* [Alexander's History] by Jacob van Maerlant, a *chanson de geste* and mirror-of-princes work of the so-called "Alexander literature" or "Alexander romance" (the first edition of this genre in the *Diets*), telling the historical tale of Alexander the Great and completed around 1260 (ed. Franck, 1882); the *Rijmkroniek van Holland* [Rhyme Chronicle of Holland] started by an anonymous author and finished by the count's clerk, Melis Stoke, between 1280 and 1314 (ed. Burgers, 2004); Johannes Beke's *Croniken van de Stichte van Utrecht*

ende van Holland [Chronicle of the Diocese of Utrecht and of Holland], completed in 1346 (ed. Bruch, 1982); the theological and moral didactic works of Franconis, *Dat scaecspel* [The Chess Set], completed in 1403 (ed. Van Schaick–Avelingh, 1912) and by Dirc van Delft, *Tafel van den Kersten ghelove* [Table of the Christian Faith], completed in 1404 (ed. Daniëls, 3 vols. 1937, 1938, 1939); the poems of the courtly poet Willem van Hildegarsberch, written down by order of Count William IV of Holland shortly after the poet's death in 1408 (ed. Bisschop & Verwijs, 1981); the chronicles of Clais Heyneszoon, the herald of Albrecht, duke of Bavaria and count of Holland, written around 1409 (ed. Verbleij–Schillings, 1999); and finally the *Goudse Kroniekje* [Chronicle of Gouda], a handwritten chronicle of Holland by an anonymous author of which three copies still exist, dated 1436, 1456, and 1477, and are kept at the University Library Leiden.

2. *Berecht hi de ghemeente wel, Die onnosel es ende niet fel?*
3. *Ende den wreden weder staet Die altoes begheert overdaet ... Ende overdaet met crachte were.*
4. *mit moghentheit ende crachte dat recht te vervolgen.*
5. *Waer om een ygelic heer studeren sel omme gerechticheit te doen ende des en sal hi laten om liefheit, om leetheit, om vrese noch omme ghewynne.*
6. *Wes gherecht in allen doene. Hout de wet ende scelt de quade.*
7. *Dat ghy besiet an beyden seyden,... Weder armen ofte rijke; Want God die doet u des ghelike.*
8. *Voort so lesen wy van enen edelen machtigen heer, ghehete Erkenbaldus van Burdan, die mitter minne des gherechticheits also ontsteken was, dat hi ghenen persoen in den rechte aensach, mer enen ygheliken recht dede.*
9. *Die wert een sot off schalch ghenoeft. Die schalch en wil sijn schult niet weten; Die sot die heeftet thans vergheten Wat hi schuldich is of niet, Eermen te rekeninghe ontbiet.*
10. *Soe dat die miente niet en claecht.*
11. *Ende verdonkert sine doghet. Soe doet ene rechts vergeten.*
12. *dat de ghierige een penninc noot is, oec hoe veel dat hi heeft.*
13. *Nu hebdi den armen man versoent, mer noch en hebdi my niet versoent.*
14. Anonymous, *Goudse kroniekje* [Chronicle of Gouda], BPL 136D, LTH 1563 LTK 1564.

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